

## Strength of Shasta Regional's Cardiology Success Lies in Esprit de Corps

By **Nora Haile**

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Redding, California's Shasta Regional Medical Center is celebrating recognition as one of the Top 50 Cardiovascular Hospitals in the U.S. for superior inpatient performance. It's one of only three California community hospitals to receive the recognition. "It's quite a tribute to the whole cardiac team," says Dr. Doug McConnell, Director of Cardiovascular Surgery at Shasta Regional. The Board Certified Cardiac-Thoracic Surgeon and Fellow of the American College of Surgeons likens the team performance at Shasta to a symphony. "We all have to bring our skills to bear – blood banking, surgery, telemetry – I know the timing and the score, but can't do it without the other parts being played correctly."

He describes the culture at Shasta as an "evolved culture of excellence in cooperation." Comparing it to various medical environments he's experienced, McConnell says he was struck by the work style during a stint as relief surgeon some years before joining the team

full time. Many hospitals are more compartmentalized, sometimes to make administration more manageable due to sheer size. He notes that in comparison, Shasta Regional, which has 246 beds, "May be a smaller hospital but has a much bigger heart."



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***Dr. Doug McConnell  
Director of Cardiovascular Surgery  
Shasta Regional Medical Center***

Shasta Regional Medical Center, owned by Prime Healthcare

Services, is a full service acute care, medical and surgical hospital that's been serving the area since 1945. In addition to the recognition by Truven Health Analytics (formerly the Healthcare business of Thomson Reuters), they recently celebrated their second consecutive year as a Top Performer on Key Quality Measures. It's also an accredited Chest Pain Center (the only hospital in the North State) and has been the community's leading Primary Stroke Center since 2006.

Noting the hospital's care success, McConnell gives large credit to the critical care nursing team. "They are simply outstanding," he enthuses. "They have the ability to be anticipatory and progressive, performing at a very high level." The hospital has a longstanding tradition of strong nursing capabilities and services, backed by management, with a focus on clinical staff interaction and active patient care that makes a positive difference on patient outcomes, too. "Adherence to what's best for the patient means we reduce the take-backs to a minimum."

A previous active duty surgeon

with the U.S. Army Medical Corps, McConnell can see similarities between how he worked then and how Shasta's cardiovascular team works together. "Mission trumps everything," he emphasizes. "In the field, it was my job to support our company with the medical support care they needed to carry out the mission, in the O/R, it's the same. The patient is the mission."

McConnell compliments Prime Healthcare's management, saying its thin middle management structure supports non-bureaucratic behavior that simply wants to do what it takes to accomplish efficient high-quality care. That overlying principle helps the team realize successes like the cardiovascular services recognition because it defines the environment in which the medical staff works.

Shasta Regional's dream team, according to McConnell, "Set out to reestablish a formerly excellent

reputation for quality cardiac care. Nursing, emergency department staff, cath lab, the perfusionist who runs the heart-lung machine – all are incredible. I have an excellent PA to work with that's the best ever, plus experienced surgical techs and a talented anesthesiologist."

Describing the hands-on heart team's process, McConnell says that before each case, they exert enormous preplanning efforts. Their aim is to know exactly what the plan is before going into surgery, going through a kind of pre-flight checklist to clear up communication questions and establish expectations. That includes time with the patient and family member, examining the angiogram together. "It's educational and it brings the patient into the process, building trust," he explains, noting that the transparency puts patients and families more at ease. "They learn how to look at their own films, see the obstruction, understand why

a valve needs to be replaced, and so forth."

The communication continues throughout the procedure, because as he shares, the waiting room is the toughest place to be. "The family members meet me, but then the nurse stays in touch, giving updates on where we are, what's next, showing that we respect what they're going through."

That high-quality care commitment is what helped the Shasta Regional Medical Center achieve the Top 50 award. But as McConnell emphasizes, "I do not do heart surgery, we do. It takes every person in the O/R. The team earned this award and we're proud of what it means for our hospital and our community."

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